

1150 North Dearborn Street  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
7B4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

John De Koven House (addendum)  
1150 North Dearborn Street  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. IL-155-D

HABS  
ILL,  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPY OF MEASURED DRAWING

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20240

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

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ILL,  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN DE KOVEN HOUSE

HABS No. IL-155-D

Location: 1150 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Luis C. Castro.

Present Use: Biggs Restaurant, a fashionable North Shore (also known as Gold Coast) eating place.

Significance: This house is a good example of the domestic construction which followed the Chicago Fire in 1871. The structure, by the Chicago architect, Edward Burling, done in a simple manner, was built for the DeKovens in 1874.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1874. Source: article in the Chicago Tribune, October 28, 1965.
2. Architect: Edward Burling (1819-1892).

Burling was born in Newburg, New York in April 1819. During his teenage years he was apprenticed as a carpenter, and at the age of twenty-four he moved to Chicago to work as a contractor and builder. His first building project was that of a dwelling, located on the corner of Monroe Street and Wabash Avenue, which later became affectionately known to the senior citizens as the "Maison d' Oree." He was then contracted to build the Marine Hospital, located near the site of the old Fort Dearborn. At the completion of this work he entered the office of William B. Ogden. Later he opened his own office in Chicago, and was responsible for the erection of the large public and private buildings, among them the custom house, post office, the Tribune Building, Merchants' National Bank, and St. James Episcopal Church. The latter two buildings were the result of his association with John DeKoven, who belonged to both organizations. Burling also served as county commissioner for three years. He was married to the former Eliza G. Proctor of Orange County, New York, and they had three children: Helen, Lizzie G. and Edward, Jr.

3. Original and subsequent owners:
  - a. Legal description: Lot 4 and the south 13 feet of Lot 3 of Block 23 of Bushnell's Addition to Chicago in the eastern half of the southeastern quarter in Section 4, Township 39, Range 14.

- b. Chain of title: The source is Chicago Title and Trust Company, tract book 195-1. Lot 4 was originally bought from Gilbert Hubbard by John DeKoven and put in his wife Helen's name, February 15, 1872 (document 14878). Later the south 13 feet of the neighboring northern lot 3 was acquired from William A. Ewing and similarly placed in Helen DeKoven's name, May 22, 1874 (document 192217). The land remained in the possession of John DeKoven after the death of Helen, his first wife, and was subsequently placed under the name of the second wife, Annie L. DeKoven, November 16, 1896 (document 2681780). After the death of the second wife, the property became part of her estate and then passed through the trustees of the estate of Annie DeKoven to the estate of Louise DeKoven Bowen, the daughter of John and Helen DeKoven, August 11, 1949 (document 14610531). Louise DeKoven Bowen sold the property to Marie H. Biggs, August 26, 1949 (document 14623385). Marie Biggs later sold the property to Luis C. Castro and Edison Dick, January 31, 1964, both of whom still retain title to the property (document 19069752).

- B. Historical Context: This building was originally the home of John DeKoven, eminently successful Chicago businessman and banker. DeKoven was strongly civic minded; during his lifetime he served the following organizations in an executive capacity; Lincoln Park Commission, the Chicago Club, the Commercial Club, the Union Club, St. Luke's Hospital Board, the Chicago Floating Hospital, and the Second May Festival of 1884. DeKoven was generous but took pains that his charity should not attract any publicity of acclaim, always avoiding giving in an ostentatious or spectacular way. DeKoven displayed conservative tendencies in business and social affairs. These facts lend special significance to the chaste and relatively simple manner in which he had his home built.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The John DeKoven house, unusual in fact, is an example of a Victorian city mansion of the early 1870's, it has survived in close to its original condition.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 62' x 54'; three stories (two principal plus an attic in the mansard roof); rectangular plan.
2. Foundations: A rusticated stone facing for the basement story is backed by brickwork above grade. Below grade, these walls are stone.

3. Walls: The exterior walls above the basement are brick of conventional dimensions and smooth finish, now painted grey.
4. Structural system: From general inspection of the building it appears that the floor construction is conventional wood joists, but plastered ceilings conceal the construction throughout.
5. Stoops: The front entrance steps are of iron.
6. Chimneys: Brick.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance door is framed with narrow, flat pilasters and an arched, flat pediment all of Victorian design. The pilasters and the pediment are of stone. A pair of paneled wooden doors with glazed transom above make up the door itself. A wrought iron grill covers the transom. Each door leaf has two panels. The upper panels are arched and capped by a triangular pediment fixed to the door itself. One is tempted to characterize this use of classic motifs, untouched by the properties of educated taste, with some appellation such as "Immigrant Greek" style.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Pilasters and segmental arched pediments of stone, matching those of the entrance door, frame the windows, which are double-hung wood sash. No muntins divide the panes of glass. The third floor sash are similar, but not arched, and are framed by simple pilasters and by a triangular pediment, the ensemble serving as a dormer in the mansard roof. Inside of the house, wooden shutters fit into the window reveals. At the second floor south bay window, wood exterior detailing replaces stone, following the form of Gothic colonnettes.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The roof is a slightly concave mansard with grey slates in a fish-scale pattern. The upper portion is relatively flat. A band of open ironwork, like a miniature fence, decorates the crest of the mansard.
  - b. Eaves: A frieze of rosettes within a rectangular frame terminates the top of the exterior walls. The third story windows interrupt the frieze. The frieze is stone. At the dormers wooden console brackets project from the frieze at each side of the windows and support the eaves, which are also of wood. Grey paint, matching that on the brickwork, covers all.

9. Other information: A metal fire escape has been built at the rear of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: One enters from the east at the narrow end of a long entrance hall. A large curving stairway leads from the opposite end of the hall to the second floor. To the right, as one enters, is the largest room on the first floor. To the left are two smaller rooms connected to one another. The kitchen and related rooms are across the back of the house.
- b. Second floor: A central hall is located above the first floor central hall, leading to three bedrooms on the south side of the hall and two on the north.
- c. Third floor: Now attic apartments.
- d. Cellar: Now used for additional kitchens, wine cellar, storage, etc.

2. Stairway: The main stairway from first to second floors fill a oval space in plan. The balustrade is walnut; the newell is octagonal in cross section and the balusters are turned. At the wall side of the stairway a three-and-a-half feet high plaster wainscot decorates the wall. The hardwood wainscot cap is formed so that it serves also as a handrail. The plaster wainscot has a swirling pattern of closely spaced ridges that appears to have been worked into the plaster when it was wet. The wainscot is painted.
3. Flooring: The principal first floor rooms have dark and light oak parquet floors in decorative patterns. In the principal second floor rooms the decorative work is limited to the borders of the floors. The first floor bathroom has white hexagonal tile, 3" x 3-1/2".
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered with a smooth finish plaster. In most cases wallpaper covers the walls, and in some cases it has been painted over. The principal rooms have multiple-banded moldings at the juncture of ceiling and walls. The front room on the south side of the central hall has frieze of applied plaster decoration at the top of the wall. Hardwood paneled wainscots are used on the first floor in the entrance hall and in the south room with the bay window to the heights of five feet and to six feet two inches respectively.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: On the first floor, Victorian pilasters frame the sides of the doorways and triangular pediments in the aforementioned "Immigrant Greek" style "shelter" the openings. On the second floor a wide and deep door trim miters around door head and door jambs. A small decorative pediment has been placed above the door trim of some of these doors. Sliding pairs of doors are used on the first floor, disappearing in the wall. These doors have three panels within a larger single panel. The second floor doors are leaf doors.
- b. Windows: Above the staircase is a shallow dome-shaped skylight with a pink spotlight.

6. Decorative features and trim: The fireplaces are noteworthy. In the two principal first floor rooms on the south side of the house the fireplace openings are framed in metal surrounded by a marble band which is in turn framed with carved Victorian woodwork. Above the mantel mirrors in carved wooden frames extend almost to ceiling height. The woodwork appears to be of walnut and of maple. The fireplace front in the north first floor room is of white marble with consoles and broque curves. On the second floor, fireplace fronts are of white marble of Victorian design resembling, but not matching, one another.

7. Hardware: Virtually the only plain, functional items in the house are the brass door knobs, and they may be later work. The door pulls for the sliding pairs of doors recess flush with the edge of the doors and are projected by means of a spring. The leaf doors on the second floor have two-knuckle butt hinges with pointed tips.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Originally by fireplaces, now central.
- b. Lighting: Large electric chandeliers with pendant crystals and small, candle-flame-shaped, low wattage globes are used in the principal rooms.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house is on a corner lot. The front of the house faces east and the side to the street faces south. There are other large old houses in the neighborhood, some serving also as expensive restaurants. There is a group of neighborhood stores a few blocks to the north, and to the east lies the Gold Coast strip of high-rise, high-price apartment houses.

2. Outbuildings: A two-story carriage house extends across the west end of the lot. This building matches the house in design, materials, and color of the painted finish.
3. Landscaping: A low curb with an iron fence on it encloses a small strip of side and front yard. A brick wall encloses the rear yard. There is a tree near the southeast corner of the house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Property records. Chicago Title and Trust Company. Address not given.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. Chicago, Andreas Publishing Co., 1885-86. pp. 184, 390, 405, 408, 439, 521, 526, 650, 782, and 564-65.

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Data pages 1 through 6 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 7.

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